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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

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23 May 1967



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Approved For Release 2005/08/17 : CIA-RDP79T00826A002000010030-0

Approved For Release 2005/08/17 : CIA-RDP79T00826A002000010030-0

Information as of 1600
23 May 1967

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HIGHLIGHTS

Allied operations have resumed in South Vietnam following the 24-hour truce on Buddha's birthday. Enemy violations of the truce included at least 22 major incidents, most of which occurred in northern I Corps.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Normal military operations have resumed throughout South Vietnam following the 24-hour cease-fire in which 57 enemy violations were reported (Paras. 1-3). The 32nd Regiment of the NVA 1st Division was involved in recent fighting with US troops in western Pleiku Province.

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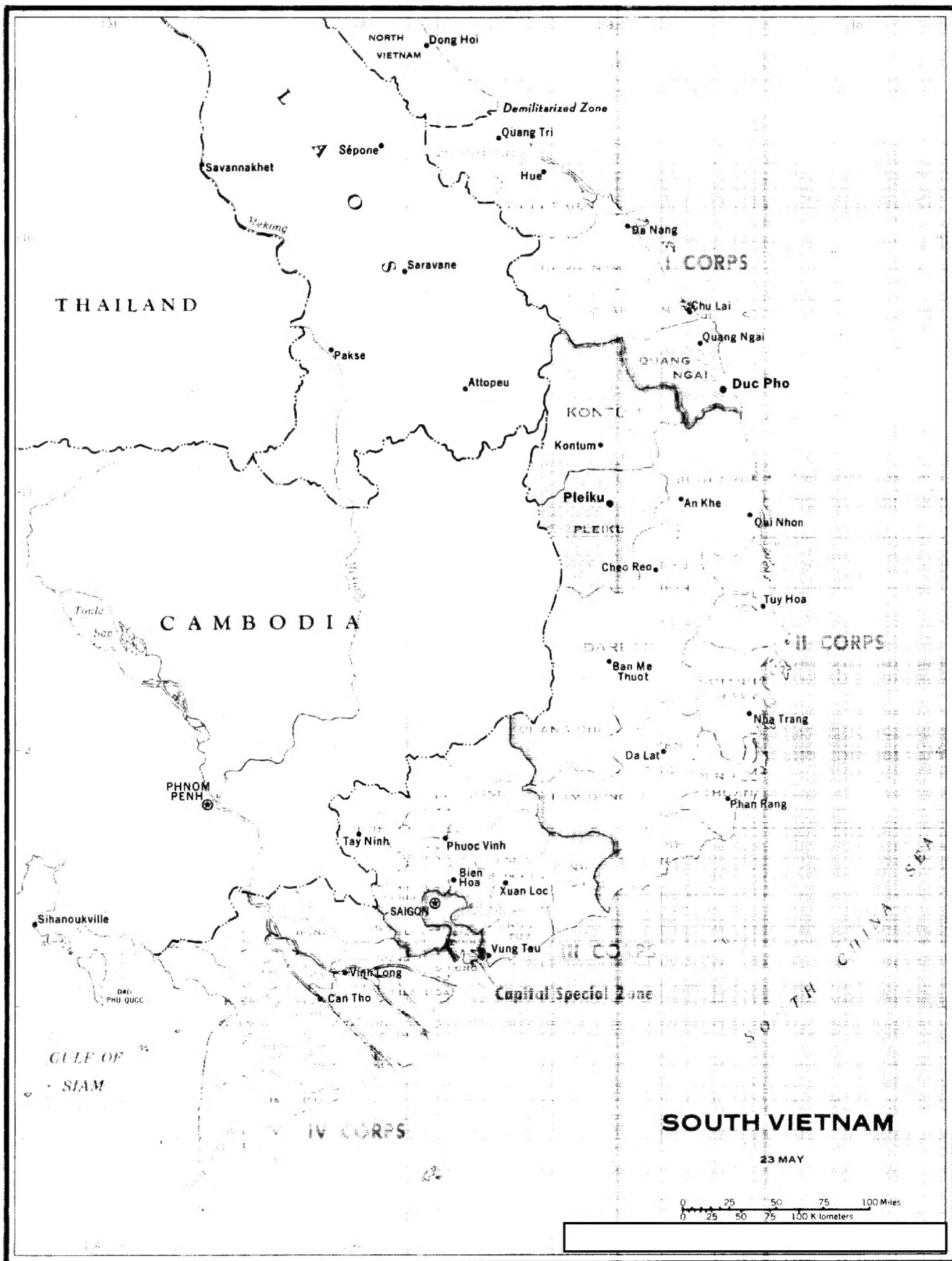
II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Chief of State Thieu's press officer reportedly surfaced Thieu's decision to run for the presidency to the Vietnam press on 21 May (Paras. 1-2). The Directorate is scheduled to deliberate on the presidential electoral regulations on 24 May (Paras. 3-5).

25X1

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Allied forces have resumed normal operations throughout South Vietnam following the allied 24-hour "Buddha's birthday" cease-fire period, which ended at midnight on 23 May (noon, 23 May, EDT).

2. During the first 22 hours, a total of 22 major and 35 minor enemy violations were reported, with the majority--27--occurring in northern I Corps. Most of the violations consisted of scattered skirmishes and encounters with reconnaissance patrols. Eleven Americans were killed and 34 were wounded during this period; enemy casualties were reported as 41 killed.

3. Two US Army companies, which established contact with an unknown-size enemy force ten miles southeast of Duc Pho in coastal Quang Ngai Province on 21 May, reported continuing sporadic contact throughout the entire military standdown period. Since this encounter began, a total of eight Americans have been killed and 13 wounded in contrast to Communist casualties of 43 killed.

Recent Activities of the NVA 32nd Regiment

4. A North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldier captured by US forces in western Pleiku Province on 21 May claims [redacted] 32nd Regiment of the NVA 1st Division/B-3 Front. He stated that four battalions of the 32nd Regiment and elements of the NVA 88th Regiment participated in the 18-19 May and 20 May engagements with elements of the US 4th Infantry Division southwest of Pleiku city.

5. The captive reported that 120 Communist troops were killed as the result of the 18-19 May encounter in which the official US body count listed 117 enemy soldiers killed. He also confirmed that his regiment has been "hard hit" by heavy US air and artillery fire. Another contact on 20 May resulted in 20 NVA soldiers killed, according to the detainee; US casualty reports showed that 18 enemy bodies had been found.

23 May 1967

I-1

6. Instances in which the US body count of enemy casualties in a particular battle can be rapidly compared with the enemy's own loss figures are still relatively infrequent, inasmuch as prisoners captured on the spot are not always knowledgeable and documentary evidence is sometimes difficult to match precisely with a given encounter. The captive's evidence tends to support the validity of the US body count in this case. The US count of actual enemy losses may have been close to the actual total in this instance because of particular battlefield conditions that hindered the enemy in evacuating its dead.

25X1 7. [] mentioned that the enemy regiment brought 120-mm. mortars into Pleiku Province when it entered from Cambodia. He did not know, however, if this weapon was used in the 20 May attack, in which nearly 225 rounds of mortar and rockets were directed at US night defensive positions southwest of Pleiku city. This large mortar, which has greater range and destructive power than the smaller 60-mm. and 81-mm. mortars the Communists most commonly employ, has been noted in the enemy inventory in South Vietnam since at least January 1966.

25X1

23 May 1967

I-2

25X1

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

1. The latest sign of Chief of State Thieu's still unofficial intention to oppose Premier Ky for the presidency appeared in the Vietnam press on 21 May. Thieu's press officer reportedly said that Thieu "has decided to run for the presidency" and that he will "officially announce his decision on a convenient date." The US Embassy, however, comments that Thieu's ultimate intentions are still unclear.

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Directorate Meeting Scheduled

3. The civilian and military members of the Directorate are scheduled to deliberate on the recently approved presidential electoral regulations on 24 May. According to US Embassy information a preliminary review meeting was held on 22 May by the civilian members plus two of the generals. Views expressed at this meeting indicated that some members will press for revision of the more controversial provisions. The civilians voiced dissatisfaction with the single election - single plurality clause as opposed to a runoff contest, as well as with the restrictive method of "introducing" candidates and with the separate dates for the presidential and upper-house elections.

23 May 1967

II-1

25X1

4. These sentiments are not shared by all of the military members, who dominate the Directorate's eventual decisions. Premier Ky, for example, is personally interested in retaining the provision for a single presidential election. However, the recently surfaced tension between Ky and Chief of State Thieu suggests that there will probably not be unanimity among the generals with regard to the need for amending the electoral laws. According to the embassy, the group that met on 22 May is believed to be largely pro-Thieu.

5. If the Directorate should request the Constituent Assembly to alter the regulations, there is no evidence that the assembly would comply. Moreover, there is no clear constitutional authority granting the Directorate veto or amendatory powers. It is more likely, in the embassy's opinion, that Directorate recommendations for revisions, if any, will be made behind the scenes.

23 May 1967

II-2

25X1

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

25X1

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